



Striking Balance: A Psychological Interpretation of Preeti Shenoy's *Wake Up, Life is Calling*

S.Magishavarthini, Dr.S.Ramya Niranjani

Sri Sarada College for Women (Autonomous), Salem - 16, Tamilnadu, India

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Abstract

Preeti Shenoy is ranked among the top five best selling authors in India. Shenoy is one among the contemporary women writers, whose focus area is Young Adult Fiction. Her novel Wake Up, Life is Calling revolves around the protagonist Ankita Sharma, who battles with the second wave of trauma, when her repressed memory resurfaces. Ankita restarts her life after surveying the traumatic phase that includes her Bipolar Disorder, suicidal attempts and getting admitted in National Mental Health Institute. Ankita overcomes her mental struggles and begins her life with hope and determination to take up the Creative Writing course. However, Ankita's mental trauma reappears when she accidentally discovers a suicide manual and the re-entry of her past boyfriend. The paper attempts to study how Ankita strikes balance in her life by coping with both the internal and the external disputes. The support from her parents and her teacher plays a significant role in the process of Ankita's recovery.

I. INTRODUCTION

Preeti Shenoy is a contemporary Young Adult Fiction writer. She is a proud recipient of the Indian of the Year given by Brands Academy. Some of her famous literary contributions include *Life is What you Make it* (2011), *The Secret Wish List* (2012), *The One You Cannot Have* (2013), *It Happens for a Reason* (2014), *A Hundred Little Flames* (2017) and *Wake Up, Life is Calling* (2019). Shenoy portrays the ebb and flow of life through her characters. Her fictions depict reality and so her characters can be closely associated with the common people. The paper attempts to study how Ankita Sharma, the protagonist of the novel *Wake Up, Life is Calling* strikes a balance against all the pessimistic circumstances in her life. The support from her parents and from her professor aids her to come out of her mental traumas and lead a normal life. The strong determination of Ankita to move away from people who hurt her helps a lot to strike balance in her life.

II. THE PAST

The novel *Wake Up, Life is Calling* revolves around the character Ankita Sharma, who restarts her life

after a tragic bipolar journey. It is a sequel to Shenoy's most famous novel *Life is What you Make it*. In that novel, Shenoy describes the love relationship of Ankita with three men namely Vaibhav, Abhishek and Joseph, the lack of parental support for Ankita and her mental trauma that leads to bipolar disorder. Through proper treatment at National Mental Health Institute, the support from her parents and the hope given by Dr.Madhusudan, Ankita recovers from her bipolar disorder. The novel ends with Ankita getting discharged from the hospital full of hope and determination to take up the Creative Writing Course.

III. DETERIORATING HAPPENINGS IN ANKITA'S LIFE

The novel *Wake Up, Life is Calling* begins with Ankita taking up a Creative Writing Course in Bombay. She feels delighted to be freed from her parents. She loves her classroom and makes new friends namely Parul and Janki. Meanwhile, Vaibhav has got a job in Bombay and visits Ankita frequently. Ankita's parents are pleased to have Vaibhav but Ankita hesitates as Vaibhav reminds of her past. However, Vaibhav's visit does not affect Ankita in any specific way. Things went smooth until one day

when Ankita accidentally finds a suicide manual in her college library. Ankita is curious to find such a book and reads it.

The actual problem commences for Ankita after reading the book. The suicide manual kindles her repressed memories and the thoughts of suicide resurfaces to her. As Ankita feels, "I thought I had fought my biggest battle and won. And yet, with just one book, here I was thinking about death again" (56). As an outlet for her mental turmoil, Ankita makes use of her creative writing ability and composes poems. Ankita hides the book and her emotions from her mother and pretends to be normal. Ankita is further disturbed by another incident. Vaibhav gets permission from Ankita's parents and arranges a date. Though Ankita feels awkward, she goes with Vaibhav. Ankita feels elated with the efforts taken by Vaibhav to make Ankita happy. In such a mood, Ankita discloses the chapter of Abhishek, who has committed suicide when she refuses to marry him. Ankita thinks Vaibhav will understand her situation and will support her. But Vaibhav's reaction disappoints her. Vaibhav is indignant at being cheated. This unexpected reaction from Vaibhav deeply wounds Ankita, as she "had expected Vaibhav to understand. But he exploded in a range of emotions" (83). Ankita feels she has become much dependent on Vaibhav, as she misses him terribly.

By that time, the cultural festival had started. Ankita has enrolled herself in Public Speaking and Dumb Charades. In Public Speaking, Ankita has qualified for finals. But when she is on stage, she saw Joseph and his sight made her recall the past. This made Ankita throw up on stage. It shows the mighty power of memories. The moment Ankita sees Joseph, a bundle of memories haunts her. She is unable to resist her mental turmoil and in a flash, she finds herself in a regrettable situation on stage. Ankita "felt sick and repulsed with myself, as I remembered all of it. And then I felt the bile rise" (107). Ankita feels humiliated and immediately returns to her home. However, Ankita goes back to the college, as she has to participate in the Dumb Charades with her friends. Ankita's mental trauma gets intensified due to the unexpected happenings in her life which leads to insomnia. She hides it from her parents and even conceals her dark eyes with make-up. Though unwilling, Ankita meets Joseph and tells her entire story. Ankita believes that Joseph is emphatic towards her. But Ankita gets disappointed once again as he reveals that Ankita has a mental disorder at a party. As Ankita thinks, "I have no words to describe what happened to me at that instant. I stood there in shocked silence and disbelief. Joseph had just told them my deepest, darkest secret" (154). Ankita feels pain and the thoughts of suicide engulfs her.

IV. PARENTAL SUPPORT

The next morning, her parents are shocked to find the suicide manual and a plastic cover. Her parents get frightened and insist that Ankita should meet Dr. Neeraj. Ankita agrees for the doctor's appointment but before that she likes to open up to her parents. She unfolds all the happenings with regard to Joseph to her parents. To her relief, Ankita's parents extend their full support to Ankita and blame Joseph. "My mother was immediately by my side. . . my own father took my side. . ." (169). Ankita feels delighted and realises that the love and care of parents have the power to heal anything. Though Ankita accepts to meet the doctor, she is nervous about the meeting. To her surprise, Dr. Neeraj is very understanding. She asks Ankita's opinion whether she can cope up without medication and prescribes only sleeping pills. Ankita gathers courage and is determined that she should not give up, as in the National Mental Health Institute. Her professor Mrs. Hayden encourages and motivates her to come out of her mental trauma. Mrs. Hayden also ensures that one is not responsible for other people's actions. Ankita's father recalls the words of Mahatma Gandhi that without one's permission, nobody can hurt anyone.

V. ANKITA STRIKES BALANCE IN HER LIFE

The guidance of Mrs. Hayden and her father has a strong presence in Ankita's mind and she decides to choose carefully the persons in her life. Ankita feels happy for the return of Vaibhav. Vaibhav apologises to Ankita for leaving suddenly and now Vaibhav understands her situation completely. Ankita thinks she should not hide anything from Vaibhav and so informs him about Joseph. Vaibhav listens to Ankita patiently and reveals that it is Ankita's parents, who asked him to visit their home. It astounds Ankita and she feels happy to get to know about the efforts taken by her parents. Ankita has got the realisation that she is not responsible for Abhishek's death, Joseph's behaviour and Vaibhav's coming back – "I wasn't responsible for Abhi's death. That was the choice he had made. I wasn't responsible for Joseph's actions. He chose to behave that way. I wasn't responsible for Vaibhav coming back. He wanted me in his life" (239). She is able to pay more attention in her Creative Writing course and even topped the batch. Meanwhile, Ankita is also plagued by negative thoughts from time to time. Even her friends like Parul hardly speak to her. However, Ankita strikes a balance against all such negative implications and begins to consciously let go of anything that does not serve her growth.

VI. CONCLUSION

Striking balance in one's life is a mental process that should be carried out effectively in each and every situation. Through this novel, Shenoy assures that one can strike balance at any stage of life. Ankita has survived two suicidal attempts and the tragic bipolar disorder journey. She restarts her life with hope. However, due to the unfavourable circumstances, Ankita endures the second wave of trauma. But Ankita strikes balance and overcomes all the negative entanglements in her life. Human life is not a bed of roses. Difficulties are a part of everyone's lives. The difference lies in the way one handles the difficult situation in an effective way. There is no problem without a solution. In that stressful situation, one should not lose hope. Further, one should realise that suicide is not a solution to any problem. Especially, today's youth lose their hope and make wrong decisions even for small issues. Even when one is in the tight corner, one should possess a ray of hope and strike balance in life.

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